

The Dinah Disaster (Part 1)

Text: Gen. 34:1-31

Introduction:

1. Jacob and his family must have dwelt at Shechem for some years as Dinah, the youngest of Leah's children, was now clearly a young woman, likely in her teens when this tragic incident occurred. She would only have been a child when they left Haran as 11 children were born to Jacob during his final 13 years there (7 years to pay of Rachel and 6 years to earn the livestock).
2. It appears that Jacob chose to settle down here on account of its favourable pastures for his flocks (See Gen. 33:17-19). Evidently life was uneventful for Jacob and his family for some time at Shechem until tragedy once again visited Jacob's home.
3. The Word of God does not sugar coat the glaring faults of the heroes of the faith and everything is in God's Word for a reason that we might receive instruction and warning.
4. We will divide the chapter into **5 sections** for our study as we seek to learn the lessons God has for us from this sobering and yet necessary chapter.
 - The Danger at Shechem (Vs. 1)
 - The Defilement at Shechem (Vs. 2-7)
 - The Deception at Shechem (Vs. 8-24)
 - The Devilry at Shechem (Vs. 25-29)
 - The Damage at Shechem (Vs. 30-31)

I. THE DANGER AT SHECHEM (VS. 1; 33:18-19)

The Bible notes that Jacob "pitched his tent before the city". The land and the location may have had a lot going for it but there were some spiritual dangers to Jacob's family lurking in Shechem. There was the danger of:

A. Closeness to the World (Gen. 33:18-19)

1. The world is never far from the Christian home and it is full of dangers. You cannot afford to have a naïve and ignorant view of the world and its spiritual dangers. Even if you are seeking to lead a separated life, you cannot afford to grow complacent. Nowadays, the world is only a couple of clicks or a couple of taps away!
2. **Be careful where you pitch your tent as a family!** It is true that we have to live in this world but to get too close to it is dangerous. There is safety in separation!
3. "Living so close to an ungodly city as his family was, soon began to foster serious perils of a sort Jacob had not anticipated. As his children grew into their teens and then into adulthood, the low moral environment around them began to have its deadly effect." (Henry Morris)
4. There are other examples in the Word of God of this principle. Lot pitched his tent "toward Sodom" (Gen. 13:12) which led to a devastating chain of events.

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5. We cannot live in total isolation from the world (we are separatists, not isolationists) but there will be key decisions in our earthly walk where we are presented with the temptation to pitch our lives dangerously close to the world and its seductions.
6. We would suggest that Bethel (the house of God) would have been a safer place for Jacob to pitch his tent. The same principle goes for Christian families today. Get your family's tent pitched in the New Testament house of God and be there each time the doors are open. It's a place of spiritual safety for your family! There is even physical safety in being regular in God's house!
7. Let us remind ourselves on some key exhortations of God's Word concerning the nature of this wicked world and our relationship to it. The message of God's Word is crystal clear:
 - a. **DON'T BE IGNORANT ABOUT IT!** 1 John 5:19 "*And we know that we are of God, and **the whole world lieth in wickedness.***"
 - b. **DON'T BE A FRIEND OF IT!** James 4:4 "*Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*"
 - c. **DON'T BE IN LOVE WITH IT!** 1 John 2:15-17 "*Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*"
 - d. **DON'T BE A PART OF IT!** 2 Cor. 6:14-18 "*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. **Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*;** and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*"
8. "Worldliness is hard to define, but it is very easy to feel, to detect, and to describe. It is an atmosphere, enervating¹ (weakening), lowering, poisoning, deadening; and whenever individuals and churches are under its sway, the result, however long delayed, is as inevitable as it is disastrous to the soul and dishonouring to God." (Thomas)

B. Conformity to the World

- a. The low spiritual environment during this period appears to have had an effect on Jacob's household as in the next chapter, he had to call his family back to purity – "Then Jacob said unto his

¹ Depriving of strength, force or vigor; weakening; enfeebling. (Webster 1828)

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household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments:" (Gen. 35:2).

- b. We know that Rachel had an affection for idols (Gen. 31:19, 34-35) and apparently it was no longer confined just to her. Is it possible that nearby Shechem was having an influence on Jacob's family in this area?
- c. If the world's idols are entertained in the home, then don't be surprised if eventually members of your household start seeking out idolaters for their companions.

C. Companionship with the World (Vs. 1)

This danger is a natural and inevitable consequence of the previous two points. Closeness to the world can so easily lead to companionship with the world. This is what happened with Jacob's daughter Dinah. Dinah's desire for companionship was natural for a young lady her age and was not sinful in and of itself. She was surrounded by lots of brothers and wanted to find some lady friends. The problem was the kind of friends she sought out! There are a couple of clear warnings here.

1. Warning to young people – choose your friends carefully! They can make or break you! Proverbs 13:20 "He that walketh with wise *men* shall be wise: but a companion of fools **shall** be destroyed." There is no ambiguity with this verse; it is absolute.
2. Warning to parents – you better be involved in your children's choice of friends! We have to pause here and ask the glaring question – **where were Dinah's parents in all of this?!** The idea that when your child becomes a teenager, they enter a period of self-determination is totally wrong. You better be involved in their choice of friends or you will regret it!
 - a. Think carefully about how and where you educate your children. The influence of the teachers is one factor but the influence of their peer group is of even greater consequence. If you throw your children into the sewers of public education, don't be surprised if they get diseased! Be just as careful about "Christian schools" that have "Christian" on the outside but the world and the devil on the inside.
 - b. Don't swallow the lie that when your child reaches young adulthood your involvement in their lives practically ceases. While we do want our children to grow into adulthood and learn to stand on their own two feet, as parents we should still seek to speak words of wisdom and guidance into their lives.
 - c. You need to be asking the hard questions. Who is in their social group? Who is influencing their lives? Who are they connecting with online? Does my teen really need a smartphone? What potential devastation is going to take place in his/her heart with unrestricted access to the internet?

II. THE DEFILEMENT AT SHECHEM (VS. 2-7)

The danger to Dinah became a sad reality in her life as recorded in these verses.

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A. The Temptation leading to Dinah's Defilement (Vs. 2-3)

1. We see the sequence this temptation took. It is the sequence of temptation we see time and time again in the Scriptures. It moves quickly from lust to action – I saw, I desired and I took (e.g., Eve in the garden with the forbidden fruit)
 - a. Shechem looked at Dinah.
 - b. Shechem lusted after Dinah.
 - c. Shechem lay with Dinah.
 - d. Note: The Bible does not state specifically if Dinah was a willing participant in this act of immorality or if she was forced against her will. Either way, the situation was a tragic one. Dinah had made a decision to hang out with the wrong crowd and Shechem had pursued his self-centred lusts.
2. James describes the process in terms of conception to birth. The conception of lust in the heart leads to the birthing of sin in the actions. James 1:15 **"Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."**
3. Satan has been using the eye gate since Eden to tempt mankind to sin against God. With modern technology he has more tools than ever to dangle the forbidden fruit before our eyes!

B. The Perversion of Dinah's Defilement (Vs. 2b; 13, 27)

Three times in this chapter Shechem's illicit activity with Dinah is referred to as a defilement and it highlights the reality of how God sees the sin of fornication. Fornication is:

1. An unclean sin – the word 'defile' means "to make unclean; to render foul or dirty" and can refer to physical as well as moral uncleanness. To be 'defiled is to be "contaminated, polluted".
 - a. The Hebrew word is translated many times as 'unclean' in the Book of Leviticus. In fact, about 64 percent of the occurrences of this word appear in Leviticus.²
 - b. Ephesians 5:1-3 "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. **But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;**"
 - c. My prayer is that God will strengthen us to be a pure people in the midst of a polluted, perverse, promiscuous and pornographic society.
 - d. Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, purchased by the blood of Christ (1 Cor. 6:19-20); don't pollute and contaminate it with sin!
 - e. When something is unclean, what is the solution? The solution is cleansing/washing. The solution for a life dirtied and defiled with the uncleanness of impurity and sin is the cleansing of the precious, pure, powerful blood of Jesus Christ.

² According to the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, p. 349.

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- i. 1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to **cleanse us** from all unrighteousness.”
 - ii. Rev. 1:5 “And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and **washed us** from our sins in his own blood,”
2. An unwise sin – “because he had wrought **folly** in Israel” (Vs. 7). The Biblical connotation is stronger than our present-day use of the word ‘foolishness’. The word means ‘villainy’, something ‘vile’. It means “a disregard for moral and spiritual claims” and refers to sins of immorality in multiple places in the Old Testament.³ For example:
- a. A request for Sodomy was regarded as an act of folly (Judg. 19:23-24).
 - b. Premeditated rape was stigmatized as a deed of folly (2 Sam. 13:12) 2 Samuel 13:12 “And she (Tamar) answered him (Amnon), Nay, my brother, do not force me; for no such thing ought to be done in Israel: do not thou this **folly**.”
 - c. The world would tell you it is wise to engage in such activity. The Bible says you are fool to do so!
3. An unlawful sin – “which thing ought not to be done”. The testimony of Scripture is consistent and clear on this point – this sin should NOT be done. This sin is still AGAINST God and His Word.
- a. 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 “**Flee fornication**. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”
 - b. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 “For this is **the will of God**, *even* your sanctification, that ye should **abstain from fornication**: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:”
 - c. Eph. 5:3 “But **fornication**, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;”
 - d. Col. 3:5 “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; **fornication**, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:”
- C. The Reaction to Dinah’s Defilement (Vs. 4-7)**

We note the main characters in this story and their respective reactions to the sin that had taken place. There is something to be learned from each!

1. Hamor’s Response – Acceptance of the Sin (a pagan response) (Vs. 4).
 - a. The culture of ancient Shechem.

³ Ibid, pg. 547

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- i. Hamor has no word of rebuke for his fornicator son when he becomes aware of the situation.
 - ii. Hamor and Shechem do not even hint at an apology throughout the entire account.
 - iii. Shechem clearly believed that living together before an official marriage was finalised was acceptable and appropriate (Vs. 26).
 - iv. The reason for all of this was simple. The pagan society of Shechem had normalized sins of this nature. In fact, immoral sins like these were elevated to the level of something sacred. Sexual immorality and perversion were often incorporated into the rites connected with their idol worship.
- b. The culture of modern society. When you have widespread acceptance and promotion of immorality and perversion in a society you can be sure of one thing, that society is pagan and godless!
- i. Our culture, like the Canaanites, widely and openly accepts and promotes the sexual sins of Shechem and Sodom.
 - ii. Our culture, like the Canaanites, has practically elevated such sins to the level of something sacred. Our society calls good evil and evil good (Is. 5:20). In fact, if you hold to a biblical view of gender, marriage and sexuality, you are branded the immoral one nowadays! If you endorse every form of twisted perversion, you are considered virtuous. It's the complete reverse to the truth of God's Word!
 - iii. Our culture, like the Canaanites, sees no problem with living together before marriage (De Facto relationships). It used to be called "living in sin" even by the unsaved in our culture but not anymore!
 - iv. Our culture, like the Canaanites, is in a state of all out rebellion towards the Creator and His Word on gender, sex and marriage.
 - v. **REMEMBER!** God has not changed His mind on morality nor will He ever change. He is the unchangeable, immutable God. He is the Creator of male, female and the one flesh union and it is His Divine right to lay down the rules for how such a union is to take place. God has ordained the one flesh union to be entered into **ONLY** within the confines of biblical marriage; full stop. Anything outside of that is **SIN**. Make sure your view of morals is not being shaped and moulded by a Sodom-like society!
2. Jacob's Response – Apathy towards the Sin (a pitiful response) (Vs. 5-6).
- a. It is noted that Jacob "held his peace" (Vs. 5). It is true this silence was not permanent (note the word 'until') but if you read the whole account, you will find that Jacob was too silent and

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passive in this situation. Instead of exercising strong leadership in the situation, he allowed his sons to direct things.

- b. We are not suggesting that Jacob wasn't grieved by what had happened to his daughter. However, we are suggesting that he was too passive in the situation, something we know from previous studies he was inclined to do at times.
 - c. Passivity in parents in relation to such sins in the lives of their children is a concerning trend in our day. Before you pull out the love card or the grace card, make sure you have first consulted the truth card! God's love, grace and forgiveness **IS** available to those who have sinned in this way. However, his grace and love are **NOT** available for you to abuse in an attempt to make such sins less serious than they are in the eyes of Almighty God.
3. Dinah' Brother's Response – Anger towards the Sin (a proper response) (Vs. 7) The initial response of the brothers to the news was appropriate.
- a. They were grieved at the news. The word 'grieved' means "to suffer pain" (Wilson) This was a healthy response. Such a sad and sordid event should pain the heart of anyone with any sense of decency.
 - b. They were angered at the news. Their anger was great – "they were very wrath". The word 'wrath' means "to burn, to be kindled, inflamed". Sin should anger us as it angers God (Ps. 7:11).
 - c. The attitude of Dinah's brothers to what had happened were right and appropriate. Their subsequent actions as recorded in the rest of the chapter were wrong!

To be continued in Part 2...

Conclusion:

1. Parents, where are you pitching your family tent? Are you getting too close to the world and its influences?
2. Are you walking with the wise or the foolish in your life? Who is in your social circle? Who are you pursuing as friends?
3. Are your morals being shaped by God's Word or by an immoral society?
4. Do you have the stain of unconfessed impurity in your life? The blood of Christ is the answer!